

A Review of the Richland County DJJ Electronic Monitoring Program



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Problem Statement

The juvenile justice system in the United States has developed and shifted markedly in 200 years of American history. The development of the children's court reflects the modern attitude of salvaging neglected, destitute and delinquent children, in contrast to the ancient concept of dealing with them through a court of criminal justice.¹ With this historical perspective, South Carolina established the Department of Juvenile Justice and the family court to provide guidance and resources for delinquent youth.

The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is a state cabinet agency and, by law, a treatment and rehabilitative agency for the state's juveniles. DJJ is responsible for providing custodial care and rehabilitation for the state's children who are incarcerated, on probation or parole, or in a community placement for a criminal or status offense.

The mission of DJJ is to protect the public and reclaim juveniles through prevention, community programs, education, and rehabilitative services in the least restrictive environment possible². One of the many tools that allow juveniles to remain in the least restrictive environment possible and save taxpayer money by avoiding incarceration is the use of Electronic Monitoring.

Electronic Monitoring is used in conjunction with home detention, monitor's an offender's whereabouts through a monitoring device.³ As a type of alternative to detention, electronic monitoring encompasses a wide range of systems and components, including home monitoring devices, wrist bracelets, ankle bracelets, field monitoring devices, alcohol and drug

¹ Juvenile Justice; David C. Hudson, Jr.- Infobase Publishing - 2010 - 11

² South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice Accountability Report (2014-2015)

³ U.S. Department of Justice; James F. Austin- 2005

testing devices, voice verification systems, and global positioning systems.⁴ The systems are even more useful with juvenile offenders who can be charged with status offenses including runaway.

Electronic monitoring programs are utilized in many states throughout the nation to limit costly jail and prison populations in the adult and juvenile justice systems. These programs can be used for released prisoners or as an alternative to incarceration. The most common goals of an electronic monitoring program generally are: the promotion of public and victim safety, offender accountability, behavior change that leads to reductions in recidivism and assistance in easing local jail or prison populations.⁵ Of course this ease in incarceration among juvenile offenders saves money for the state of South Carolina while maintaining the agency's mission of "least restrictive environment".

The term "least restrictive environment" is important in the juvenile justice system because juveniles are treated differently than adults. Many psychologists and psychiatrists agree that juveniles are not the same as adults and that transferring juvenile offenders to criminal courts is therefore an injustice. Recent brain studies indicate children and adolescents process emotionally charged information in that part of the brain responsible for instinct and gut reaction, while adults do this work in the more "rational" frontal section. Other research shows that while strong emotions can cloud or distort judgments for both adults and adolescents, teens experience wider and more frequent mood swings. All of this suggests that juveniles lack the cognitive and

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice; National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center - 1999

⁵ BI Incorporated, Defining the Goals of an Electronic Monitoring Program, <http://bi.com/blog>, 2015

emotional maturity of adults, are less able to think rationally or clearly when faced with emotionally charged decisions, and should be less culpable for their actions.⁶

Throughout the country, juvenile offenders are also more susceptible to increasing their criminal behavior because of incarceration. For example, in the state of Iowa, County officials say an electronic monitoring program will be used for moderate-risk juveniles in a bid to keep them separate from high-risk juveniles housed at detention centers. The idea is if you have a medium risk juvenile and put them in a detention with two high-risk juveniles, you now have three high-risk juveniles because of negative peer pressure.⁷

The Electronic Monitoring Program for Richland County DJJ was selected as a topic to research because there were problems in the Richland County DJJ Office with equipment being lost, equipment being damaged, and staff failing to utilize the technology properly. If utilized correctly, Electronic Monitoring Technology can help reduce commitments of juveniles to secure facilities which will save the State of South Carolina incarceration costs. The State of South Carolina spends as much as \$155,490 annually to incarcerate a young person. “This is in addition to the estimated billions of dollars in long-term costs created by the excessive use of youth confinement including reduced income levels, lower tax revenue, greater reliance on public assistance, higher costs to future crime victims, and increased rates of recidivism.”⁸ South Carolina only spent \$9,147.00 per child on education in 2012.⁹

The company that South Carolina DJJ has contracted with to utilize Electronic Monitoring Services is BI Incorporated. Established in 1978, BI Incorporated (BI) is a wholly

⁶ Trial of Juveniles as Adults; Kevin Hile – Chelsea House Publishers – 2003 – 36-37

⁷ BI Incorporated, Iowa Juveniles to be tracked with BI GPS monitoring Technology, <http://bi.com/2015>

⁸ South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center, Education Policy, <http://scjustice.org/work/policy-areas/education-policy/>, 2015

⁹ United States Census Bureau (2012)

subsidiary of the GEO Group, a global leader in the delivery of correctional, detention, and residential treatment service to federal, state, and local government agencies. BI offers proven solutions to government agencies.¹⁰ Listed below are the services that BI offers:

***Global Positioning Satellite Technology for intensive offender tracking**

***Radio Frequency Technology to detect absence or presence in the home**

***Transdermal alcohol monitoring to continually sense drinking events**

***Mobile alcohol monitoring that measures Breath Alcohol Content (BrAC)**

***In-home remote alcohol testing system with biometric voice verification**

***Reentry programs to facilitate successful transition to the community**

Another reason Electronic Monitoring was a significant problem in our office was cost associated with each unit. Each unit is expensive so anytime a unit is damaged or lost there can be a great financial loss to the agency. This is an even bigger issue in the Richland County, South

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Another reason Electronic Monitoring was a significant problem in our office was cost associated with each unit. Each unit is expensive so anytime a unit is damaged or lost there can be a great financial loss to the agency. This is an even bigger issue in the Richland County, South Carolina DJJ because the office is responsible for more units when compared to most counties because of the staff size, the county size, and the metropolitan area of Columbia. Approximately 25 to 30 units can be utilized during the same period of time. The following outline illustrates the cost of each entire Electronic Monitoring Unit and a description of each part and the costs associated with each part. This price listing is provided by the South Carolina DJJ Finance Department:

¹⁰ US Communities, <https://www.uscommunities.org/suppliers/bi.incorporated/>

BI ExacuTrack One GPS – Replacement Cost Prices Listing

ET1 Tracker (Complete Unit) - \$1,740.00

Beacon - \$250.00

ET1 Strap - \$30.00 each side, there are two slides per unit

ET1 Wall Power Charger - \$112.00

-Wall Charger w/o Power Cord - \$99.00

- Power Cord only - \$13.00

ET1 Charging Port Protective Cover - \$2.50

ET1 Buckle - \$28.75

ET1 Rechargeable Battery - \$57.50

ET1 Back Plate - \$12.50

Data Collection

A survey was utilized to determine the most effective manner to implement the Electronic Monitoring Program for Richland County Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). A survey was designed to ask questions pertaining to areas of concern including minimizing damage to units, minimizing the loss of equipment, equipment availability, and training. The surveys were sent to 21 staff members who utilize the technology.

The survey asked staff to answer questions about how they utilized electronic monitoring technology (Appendix A). Out of the 21 staff members who were sent the survey, 17 responded which resulted in approximately an 81% response rate. Developing a survey which asked staff members how they utilize electronic monitoring was the most effective way to gather

information on how to improve the program since most of the problems with the technology was influenced by staff utilization of the program.

Data Analysis

Comparing the answers to the survey indicate that the biggest problems with the Electronic Monitoring Process was a lack of training on how to set a unit up in a home, how to apply and remove a unit from a youth, and how to read the information presented by BI (the company that contracts with DJJ to provide the technology). Another problem that became apparent during the survey was that on several occasions units were not available when a youth was court ordered to receive Electronic Monitoring or when it was being used as a graduated sanction.

The questions asked in the survey were designed to identify possible reasons why the Electronic Monitoring Program in Richland County was not working effectively. Questions were asked to determine if the problems were a lack of employee knowledge, a refusal of the employee to follow proper procedures, or an issue with the youth following the directions of the staff. The questions that focused on employee knowledge included do you understand how to read BI information, do you know how to set up a unit in the home, and have you ever been trained on how to put on an electronic monitor? The answers to these questions indicated that there was a lack of employee knowledge related to electronic monitoring technology.

Out of the 17 respondents to the survey, only 4 answered “yes” to all of these questions. Four staff stated that they knew how to read BI information and set up a unit in the home but they had never been to a training facilitated by management on the subject. After further research, I discovered many of these staff members were trained informally by more seasoned

staff which left management unaware of whether or not these staff really knew the proper way to apply the technology. Two other staff stated they had received training. One of those staff stated they couldn't read BI information and the other stated they couldn't set up a unit in the home. This result indicated that these staff needed training concerning electronic monitoring (since it had been over three years since they attended training on the subject) or they were inadequately trained in the first place. The remaining staff answered "no" to all of the questions which indicated they did not understand the software technology or the hardware technology because they had never been trained on either aspect of the program.

Another problem discovered during the survey was that there was a lack of monitors available for use often when needed. The survey asked the questions "are monitors available when you need them". The options for a response were "always", "usually", "sometimes", and "never". Although it was encouraging that none of the staff answered "never", it was not encouraging that only 2 staff stated that electronic monitors are "always" available when they need them. Six staff stated monitors were "usually" available when they needed them and 9 staff stated monitors were "sometimes" available when they needed them. This indicated that there were occurrences that a staff actually needed the equipment but the equipment wasn't available. In one survey the staff member even added additional detail stating that many times they have to attempt to repair a monitor or "build" one from parts of older monitors.

Implementation Plan

Following the initial survey results, it was determined that a training needed to be scheduled for all 21 staff members. The training would address software issues including how to access and utilize most of the features within the technology. The second phase of the training

would address hardware issues including how to set up a unit in a home and how to properly apply a unit to a youth's leg.

As Director of the Richland County Department of Juvenile Justice, I was able to contact the Director of the Lancaster Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) during a manager's meeting. The Director of Lancaster County DJJ was chosen as a trainer for Richland County staff because he was the only person in the region who was a liaison with the company who held the contract for electronic monitoring equipment technology (BI Incorporated). This director was considered an expert on this topic among all managers in the agency.

A date and time was selected to have the training. This appeared to be the most effective and efficient way to address the training issue because the trainer was knowledgeable, it didn't cost any extra time or money to have the training, and he was accessible during and after the training.

The training lasted approximately 4 hours. The first 2 hours involved how to utilize the software technology which included how to move from one screen to another, how to monitor the client, and how to prioritize the information. The last two hours of the training involved how to assemble the hardware and apply to a youth's leg.

The other part of the implementation plan involved developing a process to improve the availability of monitors. The first step in the action plan was to collect all "in house" monitoring units to look at them so I could make sure all the parts were there and they were working properly. Out of the 18 monitors that were in the office, only 7 actually had all the parts and were fully operational. Eleven monitors had to be turned in to the regional office which means approximately \$19,140.00 was being wasted according to the cost of each unit. Once the

damaged monitors were returned, they were replaced with new monitors and more were added to bring the total available to 25 in the Richland County office.

The next steps of the action plan were to develop a process that gave the office additional resources for obtaining units if the office ever depleted the inventory. The first option would be to contact our regional office to see if we could gain a unit from there. The next option would be to contact the Kershaw County Department of Juvenile Justice because that county is in the same judicial circuit as Richland County. That means both counties work with the same Solicitor's Office responsible for presenting cases in court. Our final option would be for the County Director to travel to the closest county possible to borrow a monitoring unit from that county. The main idea management wanted to convey to staff from now on was "electronic monitoring units are always available, we can always get one".

The process of developing a more efficient process for monitor availability was quite revealing. The most revealing aspect of the process was to see that almost \$20,000.00 was being wasted simply by not maintaining an efficient process.

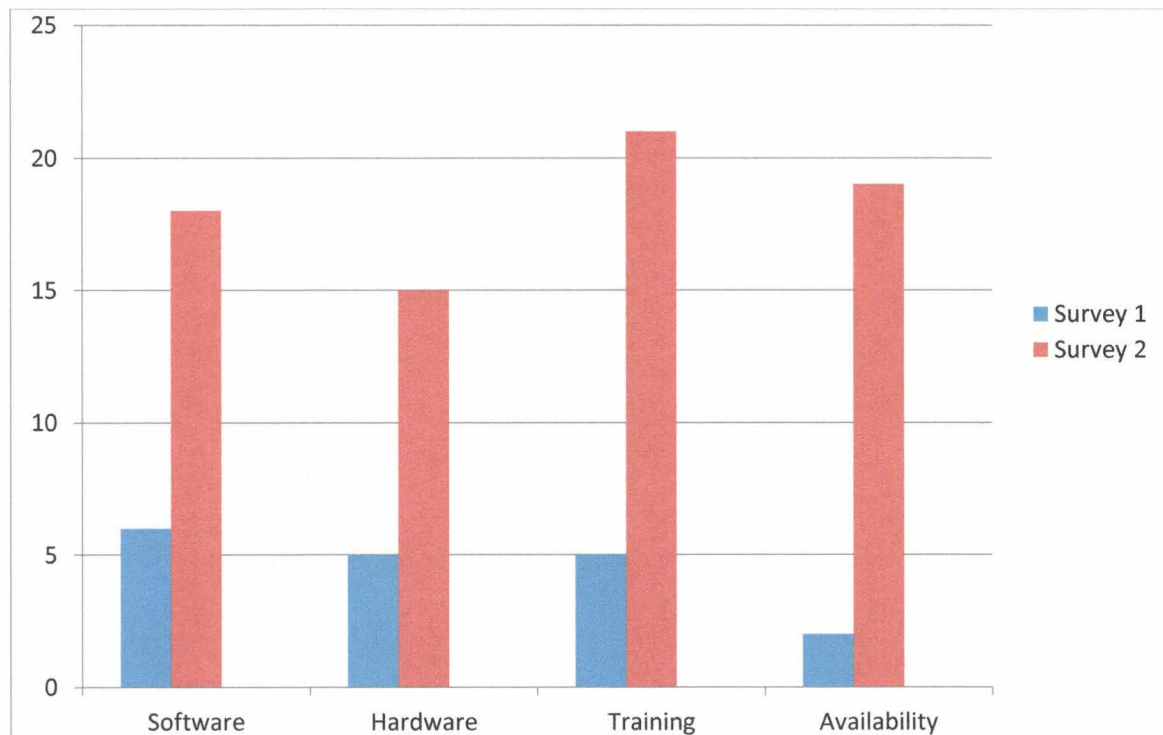
Evaluation Method

A post survey was the evaluation method utilized to determine the effectiveness of training and the development of a new inventory process. The survey was sent to the 17 respondents in the first survey. All previous respondents responded the second time. After reviewing this project, the post survey was sent to the remaining 4 staff who didn't respond to the first survey. The survey was sent to these 4 staff because they participated in the mandatory training. The second survey focused on those questions pertaining to employee knowledge including do you understand how to read BI information, do you know how to set up a unit in the

home, and have you ever been trained on electronic monitoring? Of course, the question have you ever been trained on electronic monitoring was obvious because management made the training mandatory for all staff. All staff stated they knew how to read BI information but 3 staff stated they were not sure if they knew how to set up a unit in the home. This answer made sense because the training took place in the office therefore some staff may have not felt comfortable with setting up a unit in the home until they could actually perform that skill in that environment.

Another issue we discovered during the survey was that many staff didn't have the appropriate credentials to utilize the software portion of the technology. For example, to sign up to the BI website (in order to monitor your client) you needed a BI number. It was discovered that many staff were asking other staff to get into the system for them to monitor their clients. It was easy to see why many staff could not monitor their clients effectively. Of course, this practice was ended immediately and every staff member was required to contact BI Incorporated to obtain a BI number. Each staff member was required to have the BI number available on the date of the training.

The survey also illustrated that all staff now felt electronic monitoring units were "always" available. This probably was associated with the establishment of an inventory process as well as management communicating to subordinate staff that "electronic monitoring units are always available (Appendix B). The following chart illustrates the results. It clearly demonstrates an improvement in all areas discussed:



As the chart above demonstrates, there was over 100% improvement in all areas of concern. For example, on the first survey 6 staff indicated they knew how to utilize the software program for electronic monitoring. On the second survey 18 stated they knew. In terms of putting the equipment on a youth (hardware), the staff knowledge went from 5 to 15.

Training was the easiest area to control because a mandatory training session was arranged for all staff. So, the number of staff actually trained on the technology went from 5 to 21. Availability was improved by improving the inventory process. In the second survey the number improved from only 2 staff stating that a unit was always available to 19 staff indicating this.

Summary and Recommendations

This project was an attempt to develop a more efficient process for administering an Electronic Monitoring Program for the Richland County Department of Juvenile Justice. From a

management and employee perspective, training was an important factor in improving the process. Based on this research, a plan will be implemented which develops a training process that will be continuous for all staff involved. A training curriculum will be developed to give to all new employees who start with RCDJJ a formal training on how to exhibit those skills mentioned earlier. Furthermore, all current staff will be required to attend an annual training on the subject to keep their skills current.

Managers will be required to participate in an Electronic Monitoring Training Program at least twice a year and participate in a Training of Trainers to improve their training skills. Once staff are trained in the office on software and hardware skills, they will be assisted by a manager the first time they set up a unit in the home to prepare them for application in a new environment. The training initiated during this project will only be the first step in providing ongoing training for staff in the area of electronic monitoring.

A checklist will be developed that requires staff to perform skills necessary to appropriately apply and remove electronic monitors. This will increase efficiency of the program. Finally, the County Director will contact Staff Development and Training to see if it's possible to include some training on Electronic Monitoring during the Community Basic Training which is designed to train all new juvenile probation/parole officers at DJJ.

Another important factor was the availability of equipment. A process was developed to increase the availability of units.

The survey method was an effective tool. Using the data collected the Richland County Department of Juvenile Justice will effectively improve and utilize the Electronic Monitoring Program which will save vital time and resources for the State of South Carolina.

In my opinion, this research on electronic monitoring was important because it represents the future of the criminal justice system. In a recent panel discussion at the White House on Thursday, October 22nd, 2015, President Obama said that effective data collection and a culture of transparency are essential for a shift to treatment and prevention. Accurate data and effective technology enable law enforcement to target areas where actual crime is prevalent, and can also help to identify early-stage problems in the police-community relationship. He criticized the nation's current data collection practices as inadequate, expressing hope that his administration will effect positive change on this regard. This need for increased data has been a primary focus for BI Incorporated and GEO Reentry, both companies of the GEO Care division. BI is focused on data analytics that help agencies extract useful and predictive data from years of electronic monitoring data in an effort to reduce criminal activity.¹¹ This focus on future technology will dramatically change the administration of justice nationwide and save many states millions of dollars in incarceration costs.

¹¹ BI Incorporated, Criminal Justice Reform: Obama Calls for Better Data to Support Shift to Treatment and Prevention, <http://bi.com/blog>, 2016

Appendix A--Electronic Monitoring Questionnaire

- 1. How often do you complete the Electronic Monitoring Participant Agreement and Schedule Form when you assign a unit?**

Always Usually Sometimes Never

- 2. How often have you had monitors damaged by juveniles?**

Always Usually Sometimes Never

- 3. How often are parts lost by juveniles?**

Always Usually Sometimes Never

- 4. Are electronic monitors available when you need them?**

Always Usually Sometimes Never

- 5. How often do you utilize Electronic Monitoring as a graduated sanction?**

Always Usually Sometimes Never

- 6. Do you have a BI Number?**

Yes No

- 7. Do you understand how to read BI information?**

Yes No

- 8. Do you know how to set up a unit in the home?**

Yes No

- 9. Have you ever been trained on how to put on an Electronic Monitor?**

Yes No

- 10. Do you remove the ankle monitor from a juvenile's leg before the entire unit is returned to you?**

Yes No I never remove monitors

**Appendix B--Electronic Monitoring
Inventory**

One Tracker	Beacon	ASSIGNED TO	Client	Cost
OT1104277	6306330			\$1740.00
OT1106799	6331595			\$1740.00
OT1108166	6305583			\$1740.00
OT1108253	6326200			\$1740.00
OT1108866	6326244			\$1740.00
OT1110848	6323345			\$1740.00
OT1111112	6322429			\$1740.00
OT1112962	6305970			\$1740.00
OT1117560	6331329			\$1740.00
OT1118287	6305439			\$1740.00
OT1123921	6302455			\$1740.00
OT1124871	6312304			\$1740.00
OT1125217	6327692			\$1740.00
OT1128831	6334119			\$1740.00
OT1129081	6323009			\$1740.00
OT1130642	6334186			\$1740.00
OT1131553	6330692			\$1740.00
OT1132477	6322408			\$1740.00
OT1132838	6330051			\$1740.00
OT1141326	6328335			\$1740.00
OT1143517	6310220			\$1740.00
OT1146056	6324775			\$1740.00
OT1150153	6308968			\$1740.00
OT1151581	6312263			\$1740.00
OT1153618	6315347			\$1740.00

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